

DATE/DATE:

February 1, 2022

9:20 a.m. EST

LOCATION/ENDROIT:

Outside Room 309-N, West Block, OTTAWA, ON

PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX:

Hon. Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety

SUBJECT/SUJET:

Minister of Public Safety Marco E. L. Mendicino speaks to the media before a cabinet meeting.

Question: Minister Mendicino.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Hey.

Question: Could you take a second and talk — we — we have our pool camera over here.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Sure.

Question: Just — just —

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Yeah, yeah. For sure.

Okay, one sec, here. Let me — here, I'll get nice and...

Question: Straighten up your tie. It's just — it's just us. It's just us. I'm doing — I'm doing the work for the (inaudible – crosstalk)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: (crosstalk) Just because I — I love you guys so much, so.

Question: You know, I appreciate that. We can feel the love.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Okay, there you go. How's that?

Question: Good.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Okay.

Question: When you're comfortable, I'll (inaudible)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: There we go. Too close?

Question: (inaudible)

It's alright. We're all on Parliament schedule.

Alright. So another day. What — what are you — what did you encounter coming into work today?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, look. Obviously there's still a very visible presence of — of convoy demonstrators on Wellington, but I think that what you've seen from local law enforcement supported by federal public safety partners, including the RCMP, is a very visible presence. I'm glad to see that those who work on the Hill were able to — to get in and get out safely, and that obviously includes the media. So we're — we're grateful for the support that we're getting from law enforcement about that.

I will say that there are still very significant disruptions here for local business owners and people who are trying to get to work, get their kids to school. I know that that is an ongoing concern. So again, local law enforcement will — will make those decisions on an independent basis, and we'll continue to — to support however we can.

Question: You know, Conservatives are saying that they — they want to see the data on why there needs to be this trucker mandate. Like, they were essential worker going back across — across — back and forth across the border.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Sure.

Question: Was there a lot of data pointing to significant spread from truckers?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: If — absolutely, there was. And you know, look.

Question: Well, where was that data?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, let's — let's — let's just take a step back first and — and really underline that the core of the strategy in addressing COVID-19 has been to develop vaccinations, and let's just really highlight for — for everyone how effective getting vaccinated is right now.

If you get your booster shot, you are half as likely to get infected. If you get your booster shot, you are, you know, 80, you know, 80% or thereabouts less likely to have to go to a hospital. If you get your booster shot, you are upwards — well above 90% of not having to worry about dying. I mean, that is why we continue to urge all Canadians to get vaccinated, and what we've seen with mandates is that it encourages a greater uptake of those last, you know, number of individuals who for a variety of reasons have resisted getting vax — getting — taking the shot. So that's why we're doing it.

And more importantly, the mandates that we have — that we have introduced for the trucking sector have been already, I think, helpful in getting those numbers up a little bit higher. And so that's important for the economy. We see supply chains that — that have held, and that's — that's a good thing. And so that's how we're going to get out of the pandemic, is to continue to take the advice that we're getting from health care experts, and those are the data points that we're using.

Question: We — we keep hearing from Conservative MPs and also from protesters that, hey, you know, they denounce the more extreme elements of what we've seen outside, but at the same time, there's still — there has been something growing within Canada. We had pebbles thrown at the prime minister during the election campaign. There is a wave of populism that put Donald Trump in office in the United States, and there is certainly a large group of people who are very angry and frustrated about, you know, living under the conditions that many Canadians are also upset about, if you look at the Angus Reid poll that said that they — 54% would like to see no restrictions, that people responsibly self-isolate if they get infected. So is there a concern from a public safety standpoint that, you know, where's the breakpoint? Where's the off-ramp to have, you know — there's the line of civil disobedience and also when there's conditions to breed maybe more extremist views that are coming from some of these populist movements.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, you know, I think your question is really important, and — and look, while I think we can all relate to the — to the fatigue and the frustration around having to live with the pandemic now for the better part of — of two-plus years, we do need to draw some bright lines and some boundaries around the difference between having, you know, a very vigorous discussion and debate which can sometimes be emotional — and particularly in this place, and — and, you know, I've been privy to some of those, and I think in some ways it is important to have an ongoing, very rigorous debate about how to get out of the pandemic. It's one of the hallmarks of our democracy and how we drive forward with — with progress and innovation, and that has helped us to get to where we are today — and distinguishing that from the expressions I think that you have described, which are very troubling, and they

don't just occur in our communities. And frankly, they've occurred over the last number of days here in Ottawa. Just speak to a local Ottawa resident about the impacts that they've seen, and I think we — we can all really relate and sympathize.

But it's not just in person. It's also online, you know, and I certainly have seen a real uptick — and I think many of us have seen an uptick in the expressions and the incitements of — of hate and violence, and that is troubling, and I think certainly from the standpoint of public safety and many other colleagues in government, we need to really be sure that we are identifying and taking the appropriate actions that are necessary, and we've got an agenda to do that. So thanks very much.

Question: What (inaudible) Ottawa residents a lot, and many are very — growing very tired, understandably so. But we heard from the Ottawa Police yesterday that like, you know — I asked if — would this be different if it was a Black Lives Matter or an indigenous protest out there. But you know, if I read between the lines in Chief Soly's answer, there was a clear distinction that there were trucks that could be used as weapons and this is a crowd they don't want to incite into a riot or have some sort of violent confrontation, that they're constantly trying to de-escalate the situation. But that sort of leaves a big stalemate here. What's the end of that stalemate? When is there perhaps a federal role in ending the stalemate? Or is — is the — is it so tenuous here, so tense, that there's not much that the RCMP or CSIS could do, for example?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Well, first, law enforcement is always a last resort, and that's why it is important that we — we do try to de-escalate, and — and I — again, I think that for the most part, people have been able to get in and out of the Hill in — in a manner that is safe and that's very important. And I think as — as far as, you know, the — the ongoing day-to-day operational decisions that are taken by police, local police have jurisdiction — those decisions will be taken. But we're here to support — federally, we — we know that the RCMP are there. There are other police services that have been there, and we'll continue to make sure that there's constant communication, and again, those decisions will be taken independently. Thanks very much.

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